

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, DC

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<h1>FSIS NOTICE</h1>	10-07	2/9/07
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**This Notice Has Expired. It is Provided for Informational Purposes Only.**

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR VERIFYING THE PROPER REMOVAL OF VISIBLE BEEF  
TONSILLAR MATERIAL FROM TONGUES BY USE OF SKINNING MACHINES**

**I. PURPOSE**

This notice instructs inspection program personnel on how to verify that establishments that choose to use skinning machines for beef tongues are properly [removing tonsillar material](#). Complete removal of the visible tonsillar material is necessary because this material is a Specified Risk Material (SRM) in cattle of any age. This notice provides a picture of what the tongue looks like when the tonsillar material has been properly removed, as well as a link to other photographs that depict proper removal of the tonsillar material.

**NOTE:** This notice only addresses the removal of tonsillar material by means of skinning machines. Inspection program personnel are to continue to follow the current instructions for the removal, segregation, and disposition of tonsillar material by all other means.

**II. BACKGROUND**

Under 9 CFR 310.22, the tonsillar material from cattle of all ages is designated as an SRM, and establishments that slaughter or process cattle are required to develop, implement, and maintain written procedures in their food safety system for the removal, segregation, and disposition of all SRMs. If an establishment uses a skinning machine to remove tonsillar material, it needs to address in its HACCP plan, Sanitation SOP, or other prerequisite program the implication of this use on its ability to produce safe product. Significantly, FSIS has recently become aware that for tonsillar material to be completely removed from beef tongues by the use of a skinning machine, no less than 5 mm (3/16" equals 4.8 mm and 1/4" equals 6.3 mm) needs to be removed from the affected portions of the tongue (see Attachment 1).

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**DISTRIBUTION:** Inspection Offices;  
T/A Inspectors; TSC; Import Offices

**NOTICE EXPIRES:** 2/1/08

**OPI:** OPPED

### III. INSPECTION PROGRAM PERSONNEL VERIFICATION RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Upon receipt of this notice, inspection program personnel are to have an awareness meeting at establishments that may choose to use skinning machines to remove tonsillar material from beef tongues. Inspection program personnel are to inform the establishment that if it decides to use a skinning machine, it will need to reassess its HACCP system as set out in 9 CFR 417.4(a)(3), because the depth of the cut necessary to ensure the production of safe product is a new issue for its slaughter or processing system and likely represents a change at the establishment that may affect the HACCP system.

B. In a memorandum of interview, inspection program personnel are to document who was present at the initial awareness meeting, the date and time of the meeting, what was discussed, and any documents that were shared with management. Inspection program personnel are to maintain a copy of the memorandum in the official government file and provide a copy to the establishment management.

C. After the establishment has performed its reassessment, inspection program personnel are to verify into which program (i.e., HACCP plan, Sanitation SOP, or other prerequisite program) the establishment incorporates any procedures it adopts because of its reassessment. PHVs are to verify that the establishment has appropriately addressed in its food safety system the use of the skinning machine to remove tonsillar material and, in particular, to implement procedures to ensure that:

1. when the tonsillar material is removed, no less than 5 mm (3/16" equals 4.8 mm and 1/4" equals 6.3 mm) from the surface of the tongue is removed from the affected portions of the tongue; and

2. tonsillar material (i.e., the SRM) does not remain on the blade or any part of the skinning machine in a manner that may cross-contaminate product with SRM material.

D. If an establishment does not address the use of skinning machines as set out in III. A. and C. above, or fails to execute such procedures as described in III. A. and C. above, FSIS inspection program personnel are to take the appropriate action as set out in FSIS Notice 9-04 and FSIS Directive 5000.1, Revision 2, Amendment 1.

**NOTE:** Inspection program personnel can find additional information and diagrams on the location of the tonsillar material on the FSIS Technical Service Center web page under SRM Guidance Material at:

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/About\\_FSIS/Technical\\_Service\\_Center/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/About_FSIS/Technical_Service_Center/index.asp).

FSIS has issued a training course entitled ***FSIS- 808 Beef Tonsil Material Removal and Non-Compliance Documentation*** on AgLearn. The course is mandatory for all inspection program personnel assigned to beef slaughter establishments. Inspection program personnel are to complete this training within 30 days after receipt of this notification. Inspection program personnel are allotted official time to complete the course. Estimated time for completion is one (1) hour.

For technical questions, contact the Technical Service Center at (800) 233-3935.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy S. Duff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Assistant Administrator  
Office of Policy, Program, and Employee Development

Attachment 1



Picture shows 5 mm of tonsillar material skinned from the tongue.